

## TAPE INDEX

NARRATOR Myrtle E. Buell

INTERVIEWER Phyllis Lotz

PLACE Lincoln St. Santa Ynez

DATE March 24, 1979

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Interview with Myrtle Edsell Buell  
Date: March 24, 1979, Santa Ynez, California  
Interviewer: Phyllis Lotz  
Transcriber: Phyllis Lotz  
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

PL: : Will you tell me about your Grandparents and where they came from?

Buell : My Grandparents were Mr. and Mrs. Ricker, and they came from Maine.

PL: When did they come to the Santa Ynez Valley?

Buell: In 1894.

PL: Where was your Mother born?

Buell: In Maine, in 1864, and when she was 17, they moved to Sydney, Nebraska. Grandfather was a cobbler, and Grandmother was a tailor. Mother came out here in 1888, she came out to marry my Dad, they had met in San Luis Obispo. Dad was born in Otsego, Michigan. Then on to Nebraska, where my parents first met. Dad came out here to farm. They were married in 1888. Mother's name was Angie Marie Ricker. Father was Jesse Franklin Edsell. They lived a year on the ranch. <sup>Charles</sup> Before that he had come out here with his uncle and bought 400 acres on what is now the Armor Ranch. He was about 20 years old. After Getting married they moved to the acreage that he had bought earlier. I was born there in 1891 on the Santa Agueda Creek. Dad farmed all the land, had an apple orchard where the bridge is. We had a horse that would swim the river before the stagecoach could cross if the water was high. Our ranch was a way station for the stage in the winter. I am the oldest of the family. My Mother went back to Sydney where my sister was born in 1893. My Dad bought a half partnership with John Miller in the store in Santa Ynez. Years later that store burned down and I can remember that fire. We were living in town then and I can remember going down the alley to see the fire. The store was rebuilt. My brother, Earl, was born in 1895, and my sister's name was Hazel Adeline, for Grandmother Edsell. I was named Myrtle Josephine after my Mother's mother. Brother was Earl Franklin. The store sold groceries and dry goods. Mr. Miller left town and Mr. Strahan who had a ranch in Santa Ynez came into part-



nership with my Dad, it was called Strahan and Edsell, and is now the A.L. Cockran cabinet shop on Sagunto St. The big hotel was here, and seven saloons in town. On the south corner was Brandts Store, then Mrs. Lewis's millinary store and John Lee's Barber shop. Joe Brown had an ice cream parlor where we kids went for ice cream. Nelson had a small hotel. On the north side of Sagunto was a livery stable, Minetti's Hotel and pool hall. Hartman's Grocery Store, our grocery store, a little meat market and a couple other stores.

PL: How did you father manage to operate a store and farm?

Buell: I don't know really, he went back and forth. After my brother was born(1895) Dad quit farming and we moved to town. In 1898 they built the church(on Lincoln Street). Dad helped build that church. My sister, Dorothy, was born in town in 1898. When Dorothy was one year old we moved to Lompoc. Dad took over and helped with the Moore Department Store there. He managed the store for Mr. Moore. They delivered goods to the men who were building the railroad at Surf. We would go on picnics there at Pt. Conception. He sold out in 1900, the same year that my sister Mildred was born. Mildred was born at Dr. Dimack's house. We also lived in the Spanne House (Fabing-McKay Spanne) Two year later my Father and Mother saperated, he went to another woman. It nearly killed my Mother, she had no idea what was going on. Five children, Dad sold everything even the horse that Mother had raised and trained. She was able to buy the horse back. I was sent to my Grandparents in Santa Ynez and stayed for two years, I was 9 years old. Mother and the kids stayed in Lompoc until 1907, by then I was in Los Angeles taking care of my cousin's baby, I was 15. Mother came back to Santa Ynez and she and the two girls had the telephone office as operators of the first telephone system in Santa Ynez. They worked there until the girls graduated from Highschool. The telephone office was located where the Post Office is now. The family home was back of the office.



I came home on the 3rd of July, 1908 and my first job here was taking care of Mrs. Wm. Anderson's second baby, Jack. Jim, the first child was 5 years. I stayed there until the baby was 9 months old. It was such hard work, cleaning all the house and blacksmith shop, I could not stand it anymore. Then I went to work for the Buells. I was getting \$10 a month at Anderson's, but at Buell's I got \$25 a month. This was the Linus Buell Family. I cooked for 40 men, for two years. That was where I met Harold and we went together for two years and then got married. Linus built us a little house on the ranch and we lived there 7 years.

PL: What did you serve the men at the ranch?

Buell: We had a menu, made up by Mrs. Annie Buell. We had hot biscuits every morning. The fifteen dairymen came in at 5:30 a.m. and had hot biscuits and coffee, hot cereal, bacon, eggs, potatoes, beans apple sauce, oh, they had big meals. The at dinner at noon, in the summer time, there were the hay balers, the squirrel catchers, thrashers, I had to make their lunches too. They had part of a roast, a loaf of bread, butter, jar of beans, half a cake, in each lunch box. I made two cakes every other day. And every other day 12 loafs of bread, the next day 13 loafs. Bread was never served at breakfast, muffins or biscuits. At supper everyone came in. Three crews, and the family and schoolteacher.

PL: Was Mr. Linus Buell managing the farm?

Buell: Oh, yes, he had the whole ranch. He was the oldest and only one of the first family by his first wife. They had many acres, made butter to be sent to Los Angeles. I got up at 4 a.m. and would not go to bed until 11 p.m. I was 18 years old. I washed all the vegetables, it took two hours to prepare for meals. Fixed peas and it might take two big bags of peas to be shelled. Potatoes to fix the night before, leave them in cold water over night. Mrs. Buell had a good table.

PL: Tell me about your husband, Harold?

Buell: He had been working on the ranch for a year, when I went down in August, 1909. He had been on his vacation. The



schoolteacher, Ruth Swett introduced me to Harold. And his Aunt Helen, R.T.'s first wife was also there. They said she was dead but that was not so. She had come down from Morgan Hill to visit. After awhile we went together, I only had one Sunday off a month. When he played baseball on Sunday afternoons I would go with him. If I went with him, I had to cook breakfast in the morning and do up the dishes or else. Then get back in time to cook dinner at night. Harold loved to play baseball, they had a regular circuit, played at Alcatraz(Gaviota), the oil fields near Santa Maria, Los Olivos, Santa Ynez. A regular team, called the "B" Team with all the Buells, Browns and two Mattei boys that filled in. One of the Brown boys went over to Japan to play ball as a pitcher.

PL: Were they real teams?

Buell: Yes, they played for money, competition. They called my husband Brick, because of his red hair. Then while we were going together he would come in and wipe the dishes for me. That was the only way we had time to visit. The first dance we went to was on Baseline(Ballard) across from the picnic grounds. It was on a 4th of July. All they did in those days was have picnics and play ball. It was lots of fun. We went together for two years and come Harold's vacation, we got married, Oct. 2, 1911, at Mission Santa Ines. It was horse and buggy days so we hired a buggy to take us to Gaviota and on to Los Angeles by train for two weeks. All the family came to the wedding, Mother, my brother and sisters and Grandparents and Harold's sisters.

PL: Tell me about Harold's Mother and Father?

Buell: Harold's Mother and Father were both born in Essex, Vermont. His father was Alonzo Wilcox Buell and he married Mary Carter. I never knew Harold's Mother, she died when he was 14. RT Buell was first cousin to Alonzo, and RT married Helen Goodchild, they were first cousins. I knew his father very well. He did not have red hair, it turned out every other generation. Harold had two brothers and two sisters with red hair.

PL: How many children in the family?

Buell: There were 11, Harold was the youngest. The children married and left home after they went to live in Santa Barbara. Alonzo and Mary lived a few years on the Buell Ranch, then he sold his half to RT and bought El Capitan Rancho. All the children were born at El Capitan except Harold. Alonzo sold the ranch when the



children were in highschool and went to live in Santa Barbara. Then he had race horses, and her brothers came out and started the Carter Livery Stable. They won several races with Alonzo's horses. Harold went to school to his junior year, then he quit and went to work at the Buell Ranch in Buellton.

End of Side 1

We lived on the ranch at the time the estate was settled after RT died. He died in 1905. I remember Emily (Mrs. RT Buell) and Gertrude (daughter) had gone to Los Angeles for a vacation, and they had to come back when he died. Gertrude was five years old. After seven years there, we ranched the Old Fields place (Zaca Ranch). We leased it for 3 years, had 400 acres. Then Harold farmed 400 more and we had it in grain, and the rest in beans. I had 20 men to cook for. Our first son, Harold Vincent, was born on the Buell Ranch, in 1913. Earl was born in 1915. Vincent was nine year old when we came to Santa Ynez, and after only a month on the ranch, a fire broke out and we lost the barn and many horses. Harold had a stroke from it and could not talk for three days, he was in shock. His brother and brother-in-law came up to help. Harold was going to quit but they took him to Los Angeles and bought a horse and wagon.

PL: Do you know how the fire started?

Buell: Nobody knew, the lawyers did not know. In them days there were lots and lots of hobos and we had 45 ton of baled hay in the barn. 6 ton of loose hay and Harold was the last to close the barn that night. We had two 6 horse teams and two extra teams on the seeder. I got up to get a bottle of milk for my son about 11 o'clock at night and saw the barn burning. I screamed and my brother was working for us and was upstairs. The barn boy got sick and could not help. The boys had gone to town that evening. Harold said he had closed the barn, so he knew everything was alright when he left. The lawyers figured that hobos had slept in the barn, they used to come in 5 and 6 at a time, sleep and would be gone next morning. The horses had their haulers on and could not get away. The barn had a galvanized roof and they figured out that the smoke sufficated the horses. Only one got out. The only things we saved were 2 horses. Harold let out the lease, he could not stay there any more. He went then to the Bagdad Ranch and worked for Mr. Calef



and we were there for seven years, in Los Olivos. Harold was foreman. The ranch went from Los Olivos to Los Alamos, on both sides of the road. Mr. Calef was the first rancher to raise Herford cattle here. They had a beautiful home in Montecito. He went to gambling and lost several thousands of dollars a night, and finally went broke. Harold paid the men their wages out of our own money for two years. He (Mr. Calef) died, and the bank took the cattle so we lost even that. Our boys went to Los Olivos school at that time. My sister, Hazel was a school teacher, and had married a Kennedy, whose father was a minister. We owned two lots in Santa Barbara, so Harold sold them and with our savings we bought into the College Ranch, with Archie Hunt. Archie Hunt was a classmate in Santa Barbara, of Harold's, and he was looking for a ranch. Archie did not want the whole ranch as it was too big, so they divided the ranch in half. We took the west side and Archie and Bess took the east side. We had 178 acres. We did all the building but we had the well. Archie had the adobe and the old college (Seminary) building on his half. This was in 1922. My daughter had been born in 1919 in Los Olivos. We moved to the College Ranch on the first day of February, 1922. We had a dairy, kept 30 cows in the barn. We had lots of hogs too and sold cream to Knudsens. Had 45 acres in alfalfa. We had the ranch from 1922 to 1948, when we sold to Mr. and Mrs. G.G. Davidge. We could not get help for the ranch, and the children had married and left home. We had not put the ranch up for sale, but the Davidges came by and wanted it, they said "this is it", and Harold told them, if you pay cash you can have it. Mrs. Davidge saw the place first, and called her husband, who came up with the money, threw it on the table. What could you do! Then we started looking for a place to live. My son had started to buy this place (on Lincoln St.) but could not keep up the payments, so we took it, the whole lot.

PL: When you were still on the ranch, did you shop in Santa Ynez?

Buell: We had the first Ford. When I was still on the ranch I ran a Maternity Home and took care of 35 new babies and the mothers. And we took in county children (foster) seven at a time. I had three of the nicest children from Santa Barbara, the Smiths, John Priscilla, and Jane. Priscilla wanted to stay with me.



A Stevens boys too. they have all come back to see me. Then I had an operation and could not keep it up any more.

PL: What did Harold do after the ranch?

Buell: He went to work for Mrs. Dumont. She had thoroughbred hamshire hogs and herford cattle, Harold ran the shows. He showed her cattle and hogs starting at the Cow Palace, then San Jose, Ventura, Santa Barbara. And getting prizes for them. She sold out 25 years ago and went to Arizona. My oldest boy and I visited her and she was tickled to death to see us. Harold also helped Mr. Glen Cornelius and Mr. Erwin. My son was the first one to talk over the radio and report on the fair for 4H. Harold got hurt while working for Cornelius. He was 80 years old, was riding a horse, fell flat with him and was severely injured. He could not do anything after that. He lived to be 89 and I took care of him all those nine years that he was in bed.

PL: Harold did ride with the Rancheros Visitadores?

Buell: Yes, from the very start. We had our own six hourse team in the rides. Mr. Mitchell built the big house, and they started from there. But then the rides got so big over the years. Harold missed only two years.

PL: What are your children doing these days?

Buell: My oldest son, Vincent, is retired, they live in Arizona.

Daughter Dixie lives near Lake Tahoe, her daughters are Brenda and and Helen. Son Earl has two children, Margaret Ann and Johnnie Buell. Vincent has two sons, Larry and Stephen.

PL: What orgainzations have you belonged to?

Buell: I worked with the Pythian Sisters and during World War II, four of us, Mrs. Olivia Jensen, Mable Henderson, Mrs. Dabney and I ran a canteen for the boys from Camp Roberts to Los Angeles. They would stop in Buellton and have a snack all during the war. We would make 100 pounds of potato salad, Mrs. Jensen and I on a Saturday night. We used a house near Highway 101 in Buellton. Mrs. Dabney furnished dozens of donuts a week and cakes were donated. I also helped with UVS (United Volunteer Service) and sewed and collected thousands of pounds of clothes for Korea.

PL: You have seem many changes in Santa Ynez?

Buell: It has changed from only a few buildings. In Buellton, there were no buildings except on the ranch. I have been across Buell Flat



so often. I was there the day they opened Highway 101. Jeannette(Lyons) and I tried to figure out how it used to be. I have worked many years for the Historical Museum. Jeannette and I ran the Museum for four years by ourselves. For open house, cookies, and I helped with the Santa Ynez Sewing Circle.

PL: Mrs. Buell, thank you for the interview today.

Footnote: Mrs. Buell told me that her father came back after 30 years to ask her to forgive him for leaving the family so long ago. He arrived unannounced at the ranch one day.

Also, Mrs. Buell told me that when she wanted to go into nursing as a career, her Mother would not let her, saying it was too hard work, yet, all her life Mrs. Buell has worked so very hard, as a housekeeper on ranches, in her own home, with the maternity home, and with foster children. How could all this be less hard work than nursing?

End of tape